

Message Text

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ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EUR-25 PM-07 NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20

RSC-01 TRSE-00 AID-20 IGA-02 L-03 H-03 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 FMC-04 INR-10 NSAE-00 CG-00 COA-02

DLOS-06 DOTE-00 CAB-09 IO-14 PA-04 PRS-01 USIA-15

NSCE-00 AF-10 SCS-03 AGR-20 SSO-00 SIL-01 LAB-06 /221 W

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R 291516Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4943

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 12552

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRN, US, IS

SUBJECT: ARAB BOYCOTT ON US SHIPPING AND AIR TRANSPORT

REF: STATE 211923

1. TEXT OF ANNOUNCEMENT BY ARAB BOYCOTT OFFICE IN DAMASCUS APPARENTLY AUTHENTIC. SIMILAR TEXTS REPORTED IN ARABIC (BUT NOT ENGLISH OR FRENCH) LANGUAGE PRESS IN BEIRUT ON OCTOBER 26. TO DATE BEIRUT OFFICES OF US AIRLINES AND STEAMSHIP COMPANIES HAVE RECEIVED NO DIRECT COMMUNICATION FROM LOCAL BOYCOTT AUTHORITIES RE THREAT. (PAN AM DOES NOT FLY O TEL AVIV. TWA HAS SUSPENDED FLIGHTS BOTH TO TEL AVIV AND CAIRO. WITH REGARD TO SHIPPING, ARAB BOYCOTT POLICY SO FAR HAS BEEN TO TOLERATE SHIPPING COMPANIES SERVICING BOTH ARAB COUNTRIES AND ISRAEL PROVIDED SAME SHIP NOT USED.)

2. REFERENCED TEXT APPEARS TO BE ANOTHER OF GROWING NUMBER OF ARAB THREATS TO STRIKE AT ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF COUNTRIES AND COMPANIES DEEMED UNSYMPATHETIC TO
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ARAB CAUSE. AS EMBASSY REPORTED (BEIRUT 12377), ARAB

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE IS MEETING IN BEIRUT ON OCTOBER 22 DISCUSSED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOYCOTTING PRODUCTS OF COUNTRIES HELPING ISRAEL, PARTICULARLY US AND HOLLAND. MOREOVER, ON OCTOBER 23 CONFEDERATION OF LEBANESE LABOR LEADERS MET WITH SYRIAN COUNTERPARTS, AT LATTERS' INITIATIVE, TO EXAMINE POSSIBILITY OF TAKING BOYCOTT ACTION AGAINST SHIPS AND AIRPLANES OF THE US, HOLLAND AND THE FRG. FURTHER LABOR UNION MEETINGS SCHEDULED OCTOBER 30.

3. FOR THE MOMENT, BOYCOTT OFFICE ANNOUNCEMENT REPRESENTS ONLY A THREAT, WITH NO INDICATION WHEN AND TO WHAT DEGREE COULD BE EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENTED, PARTICULARLY SINCE EACH INDIVIDUAL ARAB COUNTRY WOULD HAVE TO PASS APPROPRIATE LEGISLATION AND COULD BE EXPECTED TO ASSESS CAREFULLY WHETHER SUCH ACTION WOULD BE IN ITS NET ECONOMIC INTEREST. OBVIOUSLY, SUCH TRANSPORTATION CENTERS AS LEBANON AND EGYPT MORE AFFECTED THAN HINTERLAND ARAB STATES. NEVERTHELESS, MOOD IN ARAB LABOR AND EVEN BUSINESS CIRCLES APPEARS PRONE TO LEND MORE ACTIVE SUPPORT TO PAN-ARAB CAUSE. IN OUR VIEW, THEREFORE, ARAB BOYCOTT OFFICE STATEMENT REPRESENTS FURTHER WORRISOME ELEMENT IN MULTIPLYING ARAB THREAT TO REDUCE US ECONOMIC TIES SHOULD US CONTINUE TO BE ISOLATED IN VARYING DEGREES FROM EUROPEAN AND JAPANESE ALLIES IN ATTITUDE TOWARD ISRAEL.

4. MEASURES TAKEN WITHIN A FEW DAYS OF EACH OTHER BY ARAB LABOR UNIONS, CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND BOYCOTT OFFICE HARDLY APPEARS TO BE COINCIDENTAL. THE POTENTIAL SERIOUSNESS, IN OUR VIEW, VARIES, WITH THE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE ACTION BEING THE MOST OMINOUS. THESE CHAMBERS AFTER ALL REPRESENT THOSE WHO ACTUALLY IMPORT US PRODUCTS AND THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH WHETHER OR NOT THE US MANUFACTURERS CONCERNED OBEY OR DO NOT OBEY THE ARAB BOYCOTT REGULATIONS.
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